

45/A 12-31

## REQUEST FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION

### PROGRAM/ACTIVITY DATA:

**Country:** Philippines/ANE

**Objective:** Investing in People

**Activity Name:** Reaching Out to Most-at-risk Populations (ROMP).Project

**Funding Begins:** 01 Jun 2012 **Funding Ends:** 31 May 2014 **LOP Amount:** \$1.6 million

**IEE Prepared By:** Teresa Carpio/Jennifer Erie

**Date:** 27 Jan 12

**IEE Amendment (Y/N):** N If "yes", Filename & date of original IEE \_\_\_\_\_

### ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION RECOMMENDED: (Place X where applicable)

Categorical Exclusion	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Deferral	<input type="checkbox"/>
Positive Determination	<input type="checkbox"/>	Negative Determination	<input type="checkbox"/>
With Conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exemption	<input type="checkbox"/>

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

The purpose of this document is to review the overall activities and the potential environmental impact that will be undertaken by the Reaching Out to Most-at-risk Populations or ROMP Project. The project's Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) evaluates the potential impacts of the Project activities and has determined that a **Categorical Exclusion** is appropriate for the actions described in the document.

### **Background and Activity Description**

According to the 2010 United Nations Global Report on AIDS, the Philippines is one of only seven countries in the world to have more than a 25% increase in HIV incidence. According to the National Epidemiology Center (NEC) of the DOH, there was one HIV case per 1,000 MARPs in 2007 and this has risen to five cases per 1,000 by 2009. Over the 10-year period between 1996 and 2006, HIV/AIDS cases doubled; and between 2007 and 2009, the number of new HIV/AIDS cases doubled that of the previous 10-year period. The men having sex with men (MSM) and people who inject drugs (PWID) groups constitute the majority of the new HIV cases. In 2010, the Philippine HIV and AIDS Registry reported 1,591 new cases infected, which was 40% increase compared to the same period in 2009. The MSMs were the predominant type of sexual transmission (83%) and most HIV cases are male (94%). According to the 2009 Integrated HIV Behavioral and Serologic Surveillance (IHBSS) among MSM in Metro Manila, 40% did not feel that they were at risk of HIV, and only 22% used a condom during their last sexual act. The percentage of PWID who reported sharing needles at last injection ranged from 42 to 81% across three sites. Preliminary data from the 2011 IHBSS show that the HIV infection rate among MSM in Metro Manila is 5% and PWID in Metro Cebu is 53%. The quality of HIV prevention interventions is questionable and has not been proven highly effective in preventing the transition toward a concentrated epidemic. Significant risks continue to exist for increased prevalence among the MSM and PWID.

The 5<sup>th</sup> AIDS Medium Term Plan (AMTP) of the Philippine Government (GPH) states that “accomplishments in the coverage of HIV prevention, AIDS treatment, care and support programs still fall short of our targets to demonstrate concrete and sustainable impact in halting the spread of the epidemic.” Additionally, there is low access to and utilization of sexually-transmitted infection (STI) services by MSM and PWID, low coverage of prevention outreach activities with these groups, and low coverage distribution of preventive commodities, such as condoms, lube and sterile needles and syringes. Lack of access to these kinds of potentially life-saving services and commodities is largely due to existing national laws and local ordinances such as Republic Act No. 9165 which criminalizes the possession and distribution of drug paraphernalia.

USAID/Philippines seeks to respond to the growing problem and continuing challenges of HIV/AIDS through targeted interventions. The ROMP Project will reach out to populations most-at-risk of HIV infection, specifically males who have sex with males (MSM) and people who inject drugs (PWID), to contain and reduce the risk of a much larger epidemic of HIV/AIDS in the Philippines. This project is consistent with the USAID’s health objectives and strategy and with the GPH’s 5th AIDS Medium Term Plan (AMTP).

The program will work together with the DOH central and regional offices including the National AIDS/STI Prevention and Control Program and the National Epidemiology Center, the Philippines National AIDS Council, and Social Hygiene Clinics through focused technical assistance, supporting the 5th AMTP. Civil society should be engaged at all stages and more specifically their capacity should be built to deliver select services through the provision of direct sub-grants and collaboration with private sector partners should be planned to leverage resources. The program will contribute to maintaining HIV prevalence in the Philippines at less than 5% among MSM in Manila and Quezon City and at 53% for PWID in Cebu City in addition to supporting the national program’s target of maintaining HIV prevalence at less than 1% in the general population as stated in the 5th AMTP.

The ROMP Project has four components namely, (a) mapping of current models (b) evaluation of current models, (c) strengthening of models and facilitate scale-up, and (d) development of capacity building plan for government stakeholders and civil society organizations for the replication and sustainability of the Comprehensive Package of Services (CPS) models. The ROMP Project activities include but are not limited to the following:

- Recruitment and training of peer educators to conduct outreach
- Establishment of drop-in centers at the community level to provide health education and promote confidential and voluntary HIV counseling and testing
- Creation of and access to targeted information, education and communication materials to be disseminated in various medium, e.g. brochures, posters, online/social media, mobile texting, etc.
- Facilitating access to condoms and lubricant and safer drug-use commodities
- Strengthening of referral mechanisms from peer outreach to Social Hygiene Clinics for HIV and STI counseling and testing, antiretroviral treatment and other clinical services including drug rehabilitation
- Enhancing monitoring and evaluation systems and inter-government and donor coordination.

Additionally, the ROMP Project will continue to assist the national HIV/AIDS program with strategic information and planning activities that USAID has historically worked on such as the IHBSS and providing guidance to related operations research to the extent possible.



## Justification for Categorical Exclusion Request

The activities described justify Categorical Exclusions, pursuant to 22 CFR §216.2(c)(1) and (2), for which an Initial Environmental Examination, or an Environmental Assessment are not required because the actions do not have an effect on the natural or physical environment.

Specifically, the Reaching Out to Most-at-risk Populations (ROMP).Project interventions, as currently planned, fall into the following classes of action:

- a. education, technical assistance and training (216.2(c)(2)(i));
- b. analyses, studies, and workshops (216.2(c)(2)(iii));
- c. document and information transfer (216.2(c)(2)(v)); and
- d. activities that will develop the capability of recipient countries to engage in development planning (216.2(c)(2)(xiv)). As currently planned, no interventions will directly affect the environment.

## Revisions

Pursuant to 22 CFR 216.3(a)(9), if new information becomes available which indicates that activities to be funded by the Reaching Out to Most-at-risk Populations (ROMP).Project might be 'major' and the Program's effect 'significant', this determination will be reviewed and revised by the Implementing Partner, in collaboration with the AOR of the project, and submitted to the Mission Environmental Officer and Asia Bureau Environmental Officer for approval and, if appropriate, an environmental assessment will be prepared.

## APPROVAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION RECOMMENDED:

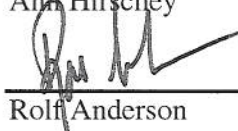
### CLEARANCES:

Office of Health, Chief

  
Ann Hirschey

1 Feb 2012  
Date

Mission Environment  
Officer

  
Rolf Anderson

2/3/2012  
Date

Regional Environmental  
Adviser for Asia & OAPA

Cleared on draft  
Andrei Barranik

27 Jan 12  
Date

### APPROVAL:

Acting Mission Director

  
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2-6-12  
Date

Bureau Environmental  
Officer/Asia

  
Robert Macleod

2/13/12  
Date